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MEMORANDUM FOR: (see distribution list)

FROM:

Director of Global Issues

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SUBJECT:

International Terrorism: Prospects for Violence
During the US Presidential Inauguration

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1. The attached memorandum represents our current assessment of the foreign terrorist threat to the Presidential inauguration and related events during the 18-21 January 1984 period. This assessment,

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concludes that while the potential threat cannot be dismissed, there is no information at this time to indicate that foreign groups intend to target US inaugural activities.

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2. This memorandum was prepared by analysts from the Terrorism/Narcotics Analysis Division.

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3. Your questions and comments on this memorandum are welcome and may be addressed to the Chief, Terrorism Analysis Branch, OGI on

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FBI Review Completed

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SUBJECT: International Terrorism: Prospects for Violence During
the US Presidential Inauguration GI M 85-10004

OGI/TNAD/TAR, [REDACTED] (31 December 84)

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MEMORANDUM

International Terrorism: Prospects for Violence During
the US Presidential Inauguration

Introduction

The 21 January public swearing in and attendant events surrounding the inauguration of President Reagan will present an inviting opportunity for politically malcontented foreigners bent on violence to air their grievances on an international stage while simultaneously striking a blow at the United States or visiting foreign dignitaries. This report assesses the likelihood that organized foreign terrorist groups might attempt to use this occasion to launch an attack on individuals or facilities involved in the ceremonies. Our focus is principally on the major groups [redacted] whose prior behavior has indicated a willingness or desire to target US interests or foreigners present or residing in this country.¹ [redacted]

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Current Threat Level

At the present time, we have no indication [redacted] that any foreign terrorist group or state patron of terrorism is contemplating either initiating an incident at the inaugural ceremonies or instigating one by sympathizers or agents already in the United States. The Intelligence Community nevertheless continues to monitor the situation very closely. [redacted]

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¹Attacks by foreign terrorist groups represent only one of a number of possible types of potential threats of violence to the inauguration. Attacks by groups with no foreign ties as well as by assorted "crazies" acting on their own initiative are at least as likely if not more so. To the extent such sources of trouble are susceptible to prior detection, they would fall under the purview of Federal and local police agencies. [redacted]

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Although terrorist attacks against US interests and personnel worldwide have remained at high levels since the late 1970s and recent casualties have been unprecedentedly high, terrorist incidents occurring in the United States have actually declined over the past three years. Thirteen terrorist acts occurred in the United States this year--compared with 31 in 1983 and 51 in 1982. None of these was committed by foreign terrorists. Although the reasons for this are not entirely clear, we suspect they relate in large part to the fact that foreign terrorists with the greatest incentive to target this country find it easier and more appropriate to do so near their home bases. During the 1984 Summer Olympics held in Los Angeles, for example, no foreign terrorist group attempted to mount an attack against the participants, despite some prior concerns to the contrary. [REDACTED]

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Regardless of these present indications concerning terrorist operations, we cannot dismiss the potential for terrorist violence at the inauguration because the United States is vulnerable. A determined foreign terrorist would have minor difficulty gaining entry to the United States given the openness of our society and the ease of entry across our borders. A committed terrorist--of the kind we are now encountering in Lebanon--willing to lay down his or her life in the attempt could cause considerable damage, at the same time requiring little support from co-conspirators or accomplices. The inauguration--like the Olympics--is a high profile activity that occurs infrequently, and the Reagan administration has earned particular enmity from some of the most virulent practitioners of terror around the world. [REDACTED]

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To the extent that foreign groups pose a threat to the inauguration, trouble is most likely to come from state-sponsored terrorists who want to harm either US officials or foreign exiles present in the United States and from separatist/irredentist groups who want to strike at foreign diplomats. Some foreign terrorist groups--the Red Army Faction, radical Shia groups that use the name Islamic Jihad, the Italian Red Brigades--are virulently anti-US and kill Americans, but their activities have been confined to their specific regions overseas and there is no reason to suspect they will target the inauguration. However, a self-styled copycat inspired by sensationalist terrorist acts abroad might try to mount an attack during the inauguration as a gesture of sympathy for foreign guerrillas and without any support from outside the country. Unfortunately, this type of action is rarely susceptible to intelligence detection and any planning is likely to proceed unnoticed. [REDACTED]

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State Sponsored Terrorism

Among those countries using terrorism as a foreign policy tool are Iran, Libya, and Cuba. Iran's immense hostility towards the United States and demonstrated capabilities and willingness to launch high casualty attacks make it the greatest potential

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threat to inspire or direct an attack against the inauguration. The 30,000-50,000 Iranian students currently residing in the United States form a pool from which Tehran can recruit potential terrorists, eliminating the need to introduce agents into this country. But Iran typically has chosen to attack the United States abroad, and the FBI reports that their investigations into alleged Iranian threats within the United States show that none can currently be corroborated or substantiated. Iranian activities in the United States have been limited primarily to arms procurement and intelligence collection on opponents of the Khomeini regime, and infighting between pro- and anti-Khomeini groups appears to have hampered plans by Iran to increase its subversive activities. Still, Iranian-inspired Shias may act independently of Tehran, and even against Tehran's wishes. [redacted]

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Libya appears, at present, to represent a less serious threat, but the large number of Libyan students residing in the United States in theory could function as a terrorist infrastructure. To date, Libyan operations in this country have been targeted at dissident Libyan exiles and not Americans. Although Qadhafi has repeatedly denounced the United States in harsh and provocative terms, none of the 25 Libyan-backed terrorist acts around the world this year were directed against the United States. The most recent Libyan activities indicate that Qadhafi probably will continue to target Libyan dissidents in the United States, rather than Americans. It is important to remember, however, that although Qadhafi apparently has been deterred in the past from striking at the United States out of fear of reprisal, he has been brazen in his willingness to target other countries and their heads of state. [redacted]

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Although Cuba supports terrorists and insurgents throughout Latin America and probably still provides Puerto Rican separatists with some funding and guidance, Castro appears wary of initiating anti-American terrorism in which his hand could be detected, particularly within the continental United States. So far this year, Puerto Rican terrorists have limited their activities to the island, possibly in keeping with Castro's concern that the Reagan administration remains willing to take direct action in the Caribbean as demonstrated in Grenada. We see no reason why the Cubans would change their posture. We cannot rule out the possibility, however, that Puerto Rican groups might initiate action on their own--although as of this writing, the FBI has no intelligence information to suggest that they are planning to do so. [redacted]

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Separatist/Irredentist Groups

Separatist or irredentist groups, many of which have large support networks in the United States, also present reason for some concern. As was underscored at the Olympics, however, most such groups are unwilling to alienate their large, ethnic support-bases by engaging in terrorist acts. Moreover, none of those groups views the United States as a target; instead, they

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focus their efforts on their traditional foreign foes, be they Turks, Israelis, Yugoslavs, or others. The greatest potential threat to the inauguration emanating from separatist groups comes from the two major Armenian terrorist groups--the leftwing Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia and the rightwing Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide. Although neither group directly targets Americans, their determination to kill Turkish officials could prove dangerous not only for official Turkish representatives but also to any non-Turkish bystanders who might be in the line of fire. Both groups have been inactive in the United States since the assassination of two Turkish Consuls General in 1982. Ideological infighting, reorganization, and the arrest and prosecution of their members may have reduced their capabilities to stage an attack during the inauguration. [redacted]

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Attacks from other separatist/irredentist organizations that sometimes operate in the United States seem even less likely. Like the Armenians, the Croats in the United States have been quiet since 1982 and appear to be in disarray after the arrests of several key members. Because Croatian terrorists target Yugoslav personnel and interests and have not engaged directly in anti-American violence, the probability of their staging an incident during the inauguration is low. While most Palestinian groups in the United States still appear to be maintaining Arafat's 1974 ban on terrorism outside Israel and the occupied territories, the Palestine Liberation Organization's internal feuding could threaten continued adherence to the ban. In 1983, for example, the FBI thwarted a scheme by some Palestine Liberation Organization members to assault a member of an opposing PLO faction. Nevertheless, the PLO derives some support from the Arab-American community and would be reluctant to undertake actions here that might jeopardize that support. Maverick Palestinian groups outside the PLO, such as the Abu Nidal group, have attacked US targets overseas in 1984, but there is no indication that they have the capability to launch attacks within the United States. [redacted]

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